

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

All Christians should operate in the Holy Spirit ("walk by the Spirit"; Galatians 5:16, 25) and be open to the supernatural. God may also choose to manifest any of the gifts (charismata) through us at any time. For example, you may be led to prophesy on occasion, but that does not mean that you have the gift of prophecy. Again, God often works healing through his people but that doesn't mean that a person necessarily has the gift of healing.

Each person has one or more gifts of the Spirit. These are given by the Spirit's will (1 Cor 12:11) for the good of the Body (1 Cor 12:7), for evangelism (see the Book of Acts), and, as a side benefit, for personal edification.

The list below does not pretend to be exhaustive. The NT is not necessarily exhaustive itself in its identification of spiritual gifts. However, any other gift claims are tentative unless verified by Scripture. The categories that the gifts are arranged in below are purely arbitrary but provide a helpful outline for thinking about the gifts. "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts..." (1 Cor. 14:1).

BACKBONE GIFTS

These gifts are essential to the life of a healthy church community. Without them, even a charismatic church will be weak and unbalanced. These gifts are mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:28 and Romans 12.

helps - (1 Cor. 12:28) devoting oneself to another and his/her situation to help in some way. "To lay hold of someone to help." Note the plural, different kinds of helps. Overlaps significantly with service, but perhaps differs in that it is not always serving somebody but can be coming alongside someone and helping them to do something or accomplish something.

administration - (1 Cor. 12:28) to steer, piloting the ship, govern. Can be of a non-pastoral nature such as leadership of specific projects or ministries. An initiator, someone to guide the way and help involve others. Note the plural, different kinds of administrations. Similar to leadership; see below.

prophecy - (Rom. 12) It is interesting to note that it is mentioned here. See below.

service - (Rom. 12) "diakonia" where we get our word "deacon" from. Lit. "waiting on tables." Practical acts that bless people, often involving physical work (see Acts 6, 1 Pet. 4:11). Overlaps significantly with helps; see the helps entry above.

teaching - (Rom. 12) an ability to open the scriptures to peoples' understanding. Don't have to be a pastor to teach but have to be able to teach to be a pastor.

exhortation/encouragement - (Rom. 12) to call to one's side, to make appeals, urge, instruct, encourage, cheer up. (See Barnabas in Acts; 1 Tim. 4:13; Titus 1:7-9). Teaching informs the head; exhortation informs the heart.

giving - (Rom 12) sharing with someone of your time, talents, or possessions. Involves sharing the word or material things. To be done sincerely, liberally, and simply (that is, with a single-mindedness unto the Lord.) This gift goes beyond basic tithing which is the responsibility of all church members.

leads - (Rom. 12) similar to administrations above. To the degree that they differ, administration would emphasize more overseeing something and guiding things to happen and go well whereas leading would emphasize initiative and authority and leading by example, participating.

mercy - (Rom. 12) to extend God's mercy to others, to make it real to them. Binding up the broken-hearted. Empathy and compassion for those in distress. Results in cheerful deeds that relieve suffering and reflect the love of Christ.

GIFTS OF LEADERS

Eph. 4:8-11 states that Jesus has given leadership to his church as a blessing. Leaders fulfill an office or function in the church and are gifted with a constellation of gifts to fulfill that calling. The leader is not of greater value or worth than any other believer.

apostle - There are two kinds of apostles in Scripture: (1) the 12 and a select few others such as Paul, who saw Jesus and have been responsible for the canon of Scripture; (2) those who were sent out as messengers or representatives of the Apostles or of a church. There are no apostles like the 12 today. No one is to add to or subtract from Scripture.

Apostles today would be equivalent to missionaries, those who are sent out by the Church to plant churches and build them up, and perhaps those in authority over multiple churches with responsibility to uphold apostolic teaching (that is the Scriptures) and adherence to it in those churches.

prophet - One who supernaturally speaks the word of God (never contradicting Scripture). Local and extra-local in ministry. Prophecy functions on a much wider level than just this office, but this function has a special place in the life of the church.

evangelist - soul winner. Bearer of the Good News. All Christians are called to be witnesses, but some have a special evangelistic gift. Local and extra-local. This gift is not about building the church beyond adding people to it.

pastor/teacher - shepherd and teacher. The day-to-day builder of the church. Feeds, protects, cares for, serves, and guides the local congregation.

The leadership's task is to work for the spiritual growth and unity of the church, including each member doing their part, would involve using their spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:12-16).

(Note: Even extra-local ministers should have accountability to a local congregation and other appropriate overseeing bodies.)

SPEAKING GIFTS 1 Cor. 12

tongues - "glossolalia." To speak in a human or angelic or pseudo language, unknown to the speaker, personally/privately or aloud in a corporate meeting. For the purpose of evangelism (Pentecost, Acts 2), edifying the church (if followed by interpretation), or personal edification by conveying worship, intercession, or a God-given message. Those who speak in tongues privately should be open to God leading them to speak out in the assembly.

interpretation - to give sense to an unknown tongue. Interpretation should always be sought after a tongue is given in a corporate meeting (1 Cor. 12, 14). Not necessarily an exact translation; might just give the sense of the tongue. Those who operate in tongues will likely operate in interpretation (1 Cor. 14:5, 13).

prophecy - Mt. 24-25; Acts 2:17-18; 21:9-11; 1 Cor. 14:3-4. To tell forth a message from God. Can entail the future but more simply is God speaking directly to his people. Will never contradict, add to, or subtract from Scripture.

KNOWING GIFTS 1 Cor. 12

wisdom - Mt. 22:15-22; 1 Kings 3:3-28; Acts 15:28; James 3:13-18. Divine problem solving. God's perspective on a situation. "...knowing the mind of the Spirit in such a way as to have insight as to how given knowledge may best be applied to specific needs arising in the body or in a person's life." (Lindsell)

knowledge - Jn. 1:45-49; 4:16-19; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 13:2, 14:6; 2 Cor. 2:14, 4:6 ("revelation" may be a synonym in 1 Cor. 14:26) Disclosure of information not ordinarily available to the person. A God-given piece of information about what God is doing or what is going on in a person's life.

discernment - or discerning of spirits. Mt. 22:17-18; Jn. 6:15; Acts 16:17; 1 Jn 4:1-6. "Ability to tell the difference between what is of the Spirit and what is of the flesh or of Satan" (Chismar). Ability to discern or get a sense of whether something or someone is good or bad or true or false or safe or dangerous, etc.

ACTION GIFTS 1 Cor. 12

faith - Something apart from saving faith. Mt. 21:18-22. "...equips the believer to discern, with extraordinary confidence, what the will of God is, and to know that God will do what is asked of Him...The gift of faith rests on no explicit promise of God but on the Spirit's revelation that what is desired is indeed the will of God and, thus, is guaranteed to come to pass." "The special ability to trust God in the dark when all the odds are against you." (I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Michael Green)

healing - Mk. 1:40-45; Acts 3:1-10; 1 Cor. 12:30; James 5:14-15. Note the plural, there are a variety of gifts for healing. Variety of gifts and variety of effects. Affecting the emotions, physical body, or relationships through prayer. Often accompanied with the laying on of hands or anointing with oil.

miracles or works of power - Jesus: feeding 5000, walking on water, exorcisms, raising dead; Acts 13:8-12, 16:16-18; Luke 10:17-20; Matt. 14:28-31. Acts of power that display God's sovereignty over creation (defying natural laws) and over the enemy (Satan and his kingdom.)

Adapted (April 2023) from Chris Raker (March 1990), who used the following resources: Doug Chismar, "Gifts from God: The 'Servant' Gifts" (handout 9/78); Harold Lindsell, *The Holy Spirit in the Latter Days*